

## GENERAL NOTES

**Dermestids killed when feeding on skeletons of birds killed by organic insecticides.**—During the summer of 1959, the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Massachusetts conducted studies on the toxicity of certain organic insecticides using the American Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) as an experimental animal. The insecticides were carefully weighed doses enclosed in gelatin capsules and force-fed individually to birds of known sex, age, and weight. Some of the birds which died were presented to me for the purpose of preparing skeletal specimens to add to our collections. Two birds were roughed out, dried, and placed in separate boxes on clean cotton in the bottom of a five-gallon aquarium which had been used previously for this same purpose, become dirty, and been cleaned with plain hot tap water. A number of adult and older larval stages of the dermestid, *Dermestes maculatus* Deg. (= *D. vulpinus* Fab.), were removed from an active colony and placed on the specimens. The next day most of the beetles were dead. Some were kicking feebly and a few were still able to move about. Every one was dead by the third day. One of the woodcock skeletons was then soaked for two days in several changes of hot water, dried, and beetles placed on it with the same results. Infestation by mites as a cause of the death of the dermestids was clearly ruled out. The insecticide and dosages resulting in the death of these two woodcock were: woodcock No. 12, five doses of Dieldrin (each dose 1.25 mg/kg at daily intervals), and No. 24, a single dose of Dieldrin at 25 mg/kg (killed the bird within three hours after administration).

During the early fall I was called to the home of a friend to receive a sick second-year Herring Gull. As I was holding the gull while talking to Mr. Chisholm, the bird extended its neck slowly and died without a tremor. The symptoms were not at all similar to those of DDT poisoning and, since Mr. Chisholm had mentioned that the bird had some slight respiratory difficulty, I was guessing it had died of aspergillosis. About a month later, I removed the bird from the freezer, roughed it out, and placed it in a box on clean cotton in a five-gallon aquarium with some dermestids. On the following day the majority of the beetles were dead or dying and subsequently every beetle was killed. I do not know whether the aquarium was the same one used for the woodcock. Even if it were, the chances of contamination would appear to be slight, since the cotton was clean, the aquarium used for the woodcock had been thoroughly washed with soap and water and rinsed a number of times, and most of the beetles appeared to remain in the cardboard box containing the skeleton. A quick check in our collection reveals one Robin skeleton which had been brought in with convulsive tremors characteristic of DDT poisoning. This apparently had had no appreciable effect on the dermestids.

The results of these experiences suggest that birds which are found dead or dying should not be placed in vigorous, active colonies of dermestids. They also suggest that, with proper experimental data for background, the dermestid might prove useful in determining whether a bird had died from ingesting lethal quantities of certain organic insecticides. I would like to thank the Wildlife Unit and Mr. Wendell Dodge for providing the specimens and data on the woodcock, and Dr. Marion E. Smith for identification of the dermestids.—L. M. BARTLETT, *Department of Zoology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, 24 March 1960.*

**Some shorebird records from Mexico.**—Among our more interesting observations while in Mexico were those of shorebirds, a group with which Mrs. Coffey and I have spent quite some time. Most species we observed, chiefly of interest as transients, are